

# Free Public Transport Exposes Regional and Rural Victoria's Public Transport Access

Aimee Le Page



Mirboo North Bus stop where three stops are made a day for the Wonthaggi to Traralgon line

Overcrowding on V/Line services this Easter break, reported by [The Age](#), has exposed the limited access to public transport for regional and rural Victorians.

As the price for fuel continues to rise, the Allan Victorian government announced free public transport for the month of April, increasing demand for the service.

Nationals MP Gaelle Broad, a member of the Victorian Legislative Council for the Northern Victorian Region, said the policy allows for more fuel to be distributed to regional and rural areas that need it.

*“Encourage as many people in Melbourne as possible to get on public transport to free up more fuel supply to come to the regions.”*

But some regional and rural Victorians argue that the initiative is no benefit to them.

In many regional communities, access to public transport is limited, with impractical timetables for work hours, limited services available and personal vehicles needed to get to services.

Gippsland local, Kody Chalmers relies on a vehicle to drop him to bus stops, as he lives out of town, meaning he relies on fuel.

*“As a regional Victorian I have utilized public transport very little because I have to drive 20 minutes to the closest town to catch the bus.”*



A V/Line bus departing from Leongatha to Melbourne, one of the only forms of public transportation to Melbourne

Greens MP Sarah Mansfield, a member of the Victorian Legislative Council for Western Victoria, says the initiative from Labor is good, however further investment into public transport for regional areas is still needed.

*“When you make public transport free people will use it, but we need more services in regional Victoria.”*

Regional disadvantage of public transport makes it harder for regional Victorians to utilize the initiative, with them still needing fuel to run errands that urban areas can do through public transport.

Broad reiterated the need for improvement, saying how the lack of services is a barrier for regional and rural Victorians.

*“It’s bit of a challenge because in many rural and regional areas there is not public transport available”*

Federal Member for Monash Mary Aldred said that fuel is essential for regional Australians.

*“Most locals rely on fuel to get to work, do the school run or get to medical appointments. It’s how our businesses and farms keep running.”*

Aldred has urged the Prime Minister to prioritise diesel to school buses in regional areas, as families rely on it for their children’s attendance at schools.

*“Unlike urban schools, where public transport or walk or ride options are available, schools in my electorate have hundreds of families who completely depend on school buses for their children’s commute to and from school.”*

The free public transport initiative benefits metropolitan areas, but with limited access to the service Victorians in regional and rural areas do not experience the same cost relief to their weekly fuel bill.